(c) whether the efforts of the'se States are receiving support in any form from Government particularly with regard to the need of communicating to the masses of the lethal impact of chewing tobacco on human lives, in order to ensure success of the ban by dint of public involvement; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ):(a) to (d) Yes, Sir. The Food (Health) Authorities of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Goa have prohibited the sale of Gutka in their respective States. The Food (Health) Authorities of States/UT Governments have independent powers under the Provisions of Section 7 (iv) of the PFA Act, 1954, to prohibit the sale of any article of food, for the time being, in the interest of Public Health.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is against the glorification of tobacco and tobacco products. The Government has introduced a Bill in the Parliament namely, the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution), Bill, 2001, to discourage the use of such products through measures such as, *inter alia,* prohibition of advertisement and banning sale to minors.

Monopoly of cable operators

*279. PROF. M. SANKARALINGAM: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that at present operators have a monopoly as far as their areas of operations are concerned and they are charging exorbitant rates from customers;

(b) whether Government propose to change this scenario;

(c) whether Government have allowed operators to increase the subscription even though there is no improvement in the quality of services provided by the cable operators;

(d) by when the Contitional Access System (CAS) would come in operation so that consumer could choose the channels of his choice; and

(e) whether Government propose to streamline the entire gamut of cable operations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD): (a) Under the provisions of Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, cable operators are required to register themselves with the Head Post Master of their areas of operation. There is no restriction on the number of cable operators operating in an area, provided the applicant fulfils the prescribed eligibility conditions.

(b) to (e) The subscription fees charged by the cable operators is, at present, a commercial arrangement between the subscribers, cable operators and Broadcasters. Hitherto there was no provision to regulate the subscription charges under Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995. The Ministry had received a number of complaints about the frequent and arbitrary hike in subscription rates and lack of transparency in the cable distribution system. The Act of 1995 was therefore, amended through Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Amendment Act, 2002 under which the Central Government has the power to specify the maximum amount, which a cable operator may demand from the subscribers for the programmes transmitted in the basic service tier of free to air channels. However, there is no provision to regulate the charge for pay channels, which would be transmitted only through an addressable system.

In exercise of the powers conferred by Sub-section (1) of Section 4A of Gable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995, the Central Government by Notification dated 14.1.2003 has notified the 15th January, 2003 as the date within six months from which, it shall be obligatory for every cable operator to transmit/retransmit programmes of any pay channel through an addressable system, in four metro cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai. Thereafter a set top box will be required at the consumers' premises to view the pay channels, but not for viewing the free to air channels. The consumer will benefit, because he can choose and pay only for the channels, which he wishes to watch. A Task Force has been constituted to examine various issues related to implementation of CAS. The focus of its deliberations will be on protection of consumer interest.